

TORINO PROCESS

ARMENIA

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List of acronyms

ALMP	Active labour market policies
MoES	Ministry of Education and Science
NSS	National Statistical Service
NTF	National Training Fund
OECD	Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development
SDP	Sustainable Development Programme
SESA	State Employment Service Agency
SNS	Strategy of National Security
SPSP	Sector Policy Support Programmes
Tacis	Technical Assistance to CIS
TPE	Total public expenditure
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

Foreword

The Torino Process

The Torino Process is a participatory review of progress in VET policy launched in 2010 by the ETF with the aim of building the capacities of national stakeholders in assessing the reform of VET. The Torino Process will be carried out every two years by all partner countries with the support of the ETF.

The objective of the Torino Process is to provide a concise, documented analysis of VET reform in each country, including the identification of key policy trends, challenges and constraints, as well as good practice and opportunities, in order to:

- support countries' evidence-based policy making, with a view to improving the contribution of VET to sustainable development, and in particular competitiveness and social cohesion;
- serve as a basis for the design of the ETF's support strategy to these countries;
- inform the ETF's recommendations to the European Commission for EU external assistance.

This report has been written in close consultation with Armenian authorities: the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Labour and Social Issues, the State Employment Service Agency, the Chamber of Commerce and Trade of Armenia, and the Republican Union of Employers of Armenia.

The report is based on a review of existing documents and on the experience and involvement of the ETF in the VET reform process through various contacts with stakeholders. The statistics come from the National Service of Statistics.

The Global Development Fund of Armenia has provided useful support to the ETF in the elaboration of this report.

Executive summary

Armenia was one of the most rapidly growing economies of the former Soviet Union during the last decade. Before the global crisis started to affect all macro-economic sectors and foreign trade, economic growth peaked at 10% in 2008. As growth has been largely based on remittances, the employment rate has remained at a low level (53%) and unemployment has remained persistently high at around 30% (2008). The transformation of the economy is still ongoing and will shape the demand for skills.

Since it is a resource-poor country that is relatively isolated from key neighbouring markets, Armenia's educated and entrepreneurial labour force and potential support from the Diaspora are considered to be the country's main competitive advantages.

While education in general and higher education in particular received some policy attention and resources in the last decade, VET has not been a priority and reforms have been rather donor-dependent. Only recently were a number of national policy documents adopted that focus on initial VET, lifelong learning and social partnership. The overall **vision of VET** by stakeholders covers both initial and continuing VET and is linked to the competitiveness agenda and an overall modernisation of the VET system. Employers' organisations in particular want to see the VET system become less academic and better suited to the requirements of companies. Until now, strategic mechanisms to translate the vision into policy measures have not been in place. However, a recent Memorandum of Understanding and Cooperation in the field of VET, signed between the Ministry of Education and social partners in 2009, is promising.

Social partners also confirm that some progress has been made in recent years in making VET more attractive and increasing its relevance to labour market needs – for example, through their involvement in the colleges' management boards.

Still, the **challenges the Armenian VET system is facing today** are manifold and to a large extent inherited from the Soviet period.

- VET still has the image of being a **less attractive option** when compared to general secondary education and higher education. The perception of VET is of a second-chance education for less privileged pupils with no other options, leading neither to university nor to attractive jobs in the labour market. In theory there is access from VET to tertiary education, but in practice, even if secondary VET required more years of study than secondary general education, it would be difficult to pass the entrance examination to tertiary education without tutoring classes, and pupils from low-income families would not be able to afford it.
- The **VET infrastructure** is very poorly developed and inadequate due to lack of funds available or allocated for VET in the past. School buildings and other facilities do not provide appropriate learning conditions and in some cases even pose security risks for vocational students. Moreover, there is a huge disparity between VET and general education schools, which further negatively impacts on the attractiveness of VET. The EU started to address this problem in 2006 through sector policy programmes that also included support for the rehabilitation of school buildings and supply of equipment. Nevertheless, there is still a lot to be done in this area.
- The **low quality of VET provision** is a major concern of all stakeholders and relates to a wide range of issues, from outdated curricula and learning materials to low quality of teaching and a lack of vocational guidance and counselling that will need to be addressed more seriously in the future. Through EU support, a first cycle of revised VET curricula has been elaborated for a few professions and will be piloted in most vocational schools in 2010/11. The Ministry of Education and Science should monitor these pilots carefully and develop plans for mainstreaming.
- Last but not least, **ownership and mobilisation of (national) funds for VET** remain two crucial challenges for successful and sustainable VET reform in Armenia. The recent policy documents concerning VET prepared with the support of international experts will need to be fully 'owned' by national policy makers and sufficiently resourced in order to be put into practice. The piloting of new initiatives will require strong inter-institutional cooperation and – despite the need for external resources – the mobilisation of national resources in order to mainstream and sustain the reform.

The ETF has been an active partner of both the EU Delegation and the Armenian authorities in the field of VET reform and has provided support in the design of policy support programmes and the implementation of pilot activities.

The Torino Process in Armenia has assessed the progress of reform and identified priority areas for VET cooperation between the ETF and the Armenian authorities, and proposes an agenda for the coming years.

This agenda is complementary to the actions that will be implemented through the EU sector policy support programmes and includes the areas of financing in VET, governance of VET, social partnership and adult learning.

1. Vision and state of art in vocational education and training

Education has received consistent attention as a priority area in the last decade in all strategic policy documents of the Republic of Armenia. Human capital is Armenia's main asset, and further consistent investment in human resources development is recognised as a top priority in national strategies.

The two fundamental documents defining the directions and priorities of Armenia's political and socio-economic development are the Strategy of National Security (SNS) approved by the President in February 2007 and the Sustainable Development Programme (SDP) approved by the government in October 2008, covering the period until 2021.

The SNS, which determines the basic values of the country's national security and the factors and actions for their protection in all sectors, considers the following to be national security

threats: (i) inadequate effectiveness of the management of the education system, (ii) insufficient level of international involvement, and (iii) incomplete/unsatisfactory availability of vocational education for all individuals. Thus, the harmonious development of the educational system in Armenia is declared a top priority.

The SDP identifies among its primary goals, targets and priorities in the context of poverty reduction the need to increase investment in social services, in particular education and health care, and thereby improve their efficiency and accessibility. The consolidated budget expenditure for education is expected to go up to 4% of GDP by 2015 and 4.5% by 2021, though this is still well below the EU average of over 5%.

The SDP also makes reference to vocational education policy, and identifies as a priority the need to ensure a competitive and better-quality education system and to increase enrolment among the poor and youth living far away from urban centres, with the aim of mitigating inequality of access among different social groups.

The VET system in Armenia is characterised by two different pathways:

- The preliminary level, aimed at training young people completing compulsory education for workers' qualifications;
- Middle VET qualifications for young people coming from three years of general secondary education¹ or after completion of compulsory education, enabling young people to supervise staff and manage production processes and services rather than implementing workers' tasks and functions.

Middle VET represents a viable education pathway for young people. Middle VET programmes are also provided in three university colleges. With the reform adopted in 2001, middle VET colleges were also supposed to provide preliminary VET, and now around 15 colleges offer such programmes. For those who enrolled after compulsory general education, preliminary and middle VET offers both a vocational qualification and a secondary general diploma (Matura) and therefore provides access to higher education. Pathways linking students' progression across the two vocational sub-systems are not promoted, despite the fact that middle vocational colleges can also deliver craft diplomas. The legal framework foresees for good middle VET graduates the possibility of having access to a second or third year of higher education, and since 2006 around 10% of almost all colleges' graduates have been enjoying this right.

VET falls under various different ministries, but responsibility for the overall coordination of curricula and learning outcomes is with the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES). Of total enrolment in secondary education in the academic year 2008/09, 5% was at preliminary level and 21% at middle level VET. Preliminary VET is mostly free, while middle VET is financed at a proportion of 25% by the MoES through the allocation of free seats and 75% by students through enrolment fees.

Because of limited allocation of resources to education in the 1990s, preliminary VET was actually suspended after the adoption of a new law for education in 1999 and transformed or merged with general secondary schools, keeping the vocational stream to some extent but without the possibility of providing any VET qualification. Preliminary VET was re-established in 2004.

In 2006 the VET system in Armenia included 28 schools for preliminary VET (craftsmanship colleges), 81 public and 23 private middle vocational colleges and three universities providing middle vocational programmes.

The number of users of private vocational colleges has decreased since 2005 from 2 982 to 2 171 in 2009, and the number of those colleges has reduced from 28 to 23 during the same period. This can be explained by the fact that the private vocational colleges are not authorised to provide the 'state model' diploma recognised on the national level.

Entrance examinations for middle VET are carried out on a competitive basis for free study places, while for paid places there is no requirement to pass an entrance exam.

¹ Until 2002 the duration of general education in Armenia was 10 years, including two years of secondary general. Eleven-year general education including two years of secondary general was adopted in 2002, and in 2006, 12-year general education including three years of secondary general was introduced.

VET inherited from the Soviet period has the image of being a less attractive system when compared to general secondary education and higher education. The perception of VET is of a second-chance education for less privileged pupils who have no other options, leading neither to university nor to attractive jobs in the labour market. In theory there is access between preliminary and middle VET to tertiary education, but in practice, even if middle VET required more years of study than secondary general education, without tutoring classes it would be difficult to pass the entrance examination for tertiary education and pupils coming from low-income families would not be able to afford it.

Since 2004, inspired by EU policies addressing the issue of employment and skills, reform of VET has become more important in the national agenda and has received quite a lot of attention from donors – particularly the EU, through budget support. In 2004 Armenia engaged in the reform and modernisation of the VET system with EU (Tacis) assistance. The VET Law was elaborated during the implementation of this project and was adopted in July 2005. The VET Law introduced a number of new elements, in particular quality assessment and quality assurance, new school management body (college board), a credit system and social partnership.

The project also promoted the implementation of a modular curriculum in pilot schools, supply of equipment and teacher training, and the adoption of a document entitled *VET modernisation priorities paper and action plan for 2005–2008*.

The EU has since then continued to provide support to the reform process with the aim of assisting the Armenian government's efforts to improve the quality and attractiveness of the VET system. Through sector policy support programmes, the EU provided a total of €34.5 million in grants between 2006 and 2009. These programmes have promoted the allocation of public funds to the rehabilitation of school buildings, supply of equipment, standards and curricula development, and teacher training. The first cycle of revised curricula will be introduced in the first school year in 78 colleges (craft and middle), starting from the school year 2010/11 (at least one profession in each school), though it will not be possible to assess the impact until 2014/15. The long breaks between the different phases of the reforms are explained by the fact that the government, in spite of political statements and the adoption of key strategic documents, still continues to devote the budget allocation mainly to the modernisation of general education, and it is only through donors' support that attention has been extended to VET. This would appear to be the position of the Ministry of Finance, which is very much against any increase in the budget for VET in spite of a positive approach from the MoES and the Ministry of Economy.

Donors' contributions have played an important role in the over-production of key strategic policies and strategies that have been adopted since the start of the reform at different levels. These include:

- **Concept on the Development of Preliminary Professional (Craftsmanship) and Middle Professional Education**, with Action Plan for 2009–11, adopted by the government in December 2008, which identifies the main objectives of VET development, strategic approaches, priorities and major policy directions.
- **Concept of Lifelong Learning in Armenia**, adopted by the government in October 2009, which defines the principles and concepts of lifelong learning in Armenia, identifies the main problems in the field and provides possible solutions.
- **Concept on Social Partnership in the Field of Preliminary Professional (Craftsmanship) and Middle Professional Education**, adopted by the government in May 2009. Four levels of social partnership – national, regional, sectoral and institutional – are foreseen, with clearly defined responsibilities.
- **Memorandum of Understanding** on cooperation in the field of VET signed between the MoES, Republican Union of Employers of Armenia and Chamber of Commerce and Industry in September 2009, which defines the parameters for employers' unions' participation in VET provision and VET development in Armenia.

Implementation of these strategies remains a big challenge, and capacity-building efforts should focus on these issues.

The specific priorities for VET reforms in Armenia identified in the Concept on the Development of Preliminary Professional (Craftsmanship) and Middle Professional Education are:

- Optimise VET financing and improve VET governance;
- Introduce competency-based VET standards;
- Increase effectiveness of the VET system and improve educational outcomes;
- Modernise quality monitoring mechanisms;
- Strengthen and institutionalise social partnership.

The priorities identified in the concept have been the basis for the design of EU and other donors' support budgets, and some noticeable progress has been made in all the above areas. However, as the system has been so badly neglected for the last 20 years, particularly in relation to infrastructure, conditions are now so poor that it would perhaps be worthwhile closing down vocational schools and moving students to other, better-equipped secondary schools. That was a proposal made recently by ETF staff when visiting a vocational school in Dilijan, where conditions are so bad that it seems impossible to create a learning environment. Apparently the capacity of the general secondary school building in Dilijan, which is brand new, with a heated sports hall and other such desirable facilities, would allow it to receive the vocational students, but the school principal mentioned that this would be a problem politically because the general school is under the responsibility of the local governorate, while the vocational college is under the MoES, and it would be impossible for the two bodies to cooperate in order to ensure better teaching conditions for the vocational students.

2. External efficiency: Addressing economic and labour market needs

2.1 Armenia's economic development

Armenia was one of the most rapidly growing economies of the former Soviet Union in the last decade. The moderate growth that took place in the first years of transition in the 1990s increased and continued until the end of 2008, registering an economic growth rate of 10%. Armenia's economy was seriously affected after independence, however, and it is necessary to mention that it took until 2005 to bring GDP back to the level it was at in 1991. The severe economic crisis that affected the country was caused not only by the collapse of the Soviet Union and consequent transformation of the economy, but also by a serious earthquake and the conflict in the region against Azerbaijan in connection with the Nagorno-Karabakh issue. Armenia is a landlocked country, and its borders with Azerbaijan and Turkey are closed. This has consequences for the mobility of people and goods and also for foreign investment, which sees the local market as not being attractive enough. Until independence, Armenia's economy was based largely on the industrial sector – namely chemicals, electronic products, machinery, processed food, synthetic rubber, and textiles – and was highly dependent on outside resources. After independence, new sectors such as precious stone processing and jewellery making, information and communication technology, finance, insurance and tourism started to replace more traditional sectors.

Foreign direct investment and remittances make a large contribution to Armenia's economy and in 2008 made up 20% of GDP.

The ease of doing business in Armenia, on the basis of the assessment carried out on an annual basis by the International Finance Corporation, has improved over the years, and the country is now ranked 43rd out of 183 countries.

Contribution to GDP by sector during the period 2000–09 showed a reduction in agriculture at 18%, with a corresponding increase in the service sector at 46% and industry remaining stable at 36%.

2.2. Armenia's human capital

The World Economic Forum's 2009 Global Competitiveness Index ranked Armenia in 97th position out of 133 countries, registering no change compared to 2008's level (the country ranked 93rd in 2007). The continuous decline in Armenia's competitiveness ranking during these years highlighted the non-sustainable nature of economic growth drivers in the country, which were expected to become apparent under negative external shocks such as the current global economic crisis.

In 2009, the largest number of respondents in Armenia involved in the World Economic Forum identified corruption as the foremost problem in promoting the competitiveness of the country, followed by tax regulations, inefficient government bureaucracy and access to financing, foreign currency regulations, inadequate infrastructures, an inadequately educated workforce with poor ethics, inflation, government and policy instability, and restrictive labour regulations.

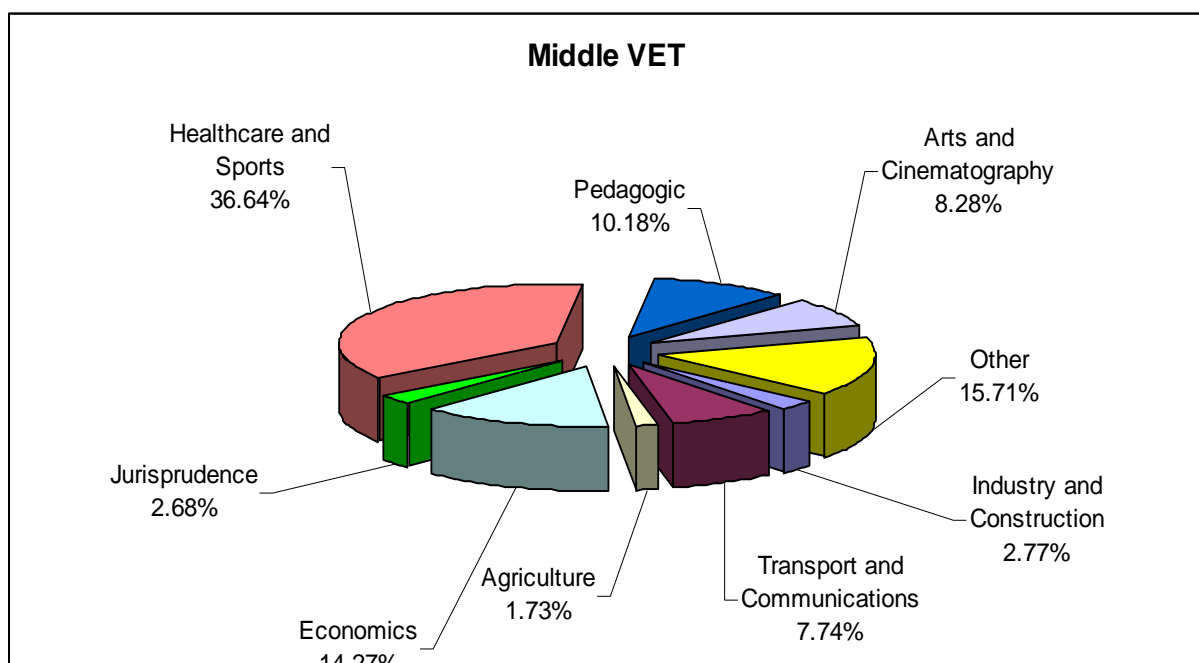
The offer of VET is still traditional in terms of qualifications, in spite of the reform that is slowly being introduced with donor support. Although formal qualification is very often in excess of the requirements of the job profile, tertiary education graduates are preferred by employers due to the declined quality or lack of responsiveness of the non-tertiary level, notably preliminary and middle VET graduates. In fact, the unemployment rate of tertiary education graduates is slightly lower (28%) than the average.

Social partners have started to be more involved in the process and are participating in the elaboration of many policy documents. Many would even be willing to invest in VET, provided that decision-making is shared with the public authorities.

Chart 1, below, shows that the dynamics for enrolment in middle VET are mainly oriented towards obtaining a diploma linked to a certain level of status in society rather than to a job. Health and sports are in the top position, followed by economics, pedagogy, and arts and cinematography. Sectors better linked to economic activities like construction and agriculture do not attract students, despite the fact that they provide better employment opportunities.

Graduates with pedagogic skills could be hired as teachers in pre-schools or the first three grades in elementary schools. Because of the high number of teachers who were made redundant after the rationalisation of the system in 1999, however, the tendency, at least in the cities, is to hire teachers with university degrees. In rural areas, because of the difficult conditions there, it is still possible to find VET graduates as teachers.

Chart 1: Enrolment of students in middle VET, academic year 2008/09



Anecdotal evidence regarding the level of recognition by society of certain profiles in VET was provided to the ETF through the visit made in 2007 to the Yerevan State Base Medical College. This is the best medical school in Yerevan, out of a total of 12 medical colleges all over Armenia. In 2007 it had a total of 3 800 students and provided training in the following job profiles: nurses, midwives, pharmacists, and dental technicians. It takes three to four years of study for pupils to obtain a diploma, and this very much depends on whether they have completed the eighth, ninth and 10th grades in general secondary.

In 2007, 95% of pupils at the school were women. During the interview with the ETF, the school principal reported that allegedly as an average, 20% of graduates find a job within one year of completion of their studies, and the remaining 80% within five years. It was pointed out that many families also like to have their girls enrolled at this school to provide an element of prestige in society and also because their knowledge of health care could be useful to the family and the community, probably through informal employment. 25% of students' fees are paid by the government, and the remaining 75% are paid by the students' families.

2.3. Employment in Armenia

As reflected by the 2008 data, Armenia has shown persistently high unemployment rates (29.8% according to household surveys, while only around 8% for officially registered unemployed) and low labour market participation and employment rates (52.8%) despite continuing rapid economic growth. The situation for women has worsened substantially since independence, both in terms of loss of employment (42.4%) and unemployment (36.4%) but also due to the burdens of maintaining families in times of economic hardship and the decline of social facilities such as health and education. Furthermore, women's role in public life, particularly in senior positions, has also diminished as in other countries of the former Soviet Union.

The highest unemployment rate is observed among youths aged 16–24, at 57.4%. The level of non-formal employment (self-employment and unregistered employment) in Armenia is very high, with many reports identifying it at a level of 30–38% of total employment.

The data in the tables below are related to employment and unemployment rates by educational attainment and gender for the age group 15–64 in 2008. It is necessary to mention that the first stage of tertiary education (ISCED 5) includes middle vocational students. The tables show a stronger position for graduates of higher education compared to those with vocational qualifications in terms of employment, explaining why VET is not considered an attractive option.

Table 1: Employment rate by educational attainment and gender, 15–64 age group

Educational level (ISCED)	2008		
	Total	Males	Females
No education	19.2	26.6	3.0
Pre-primary (ISCED 0)	40.4	70.7	18.3
Primary (ISCED 1)	16.7	18.3	15.4
Lower secondary (ISCED 2)	35.8	44.9	25.8
Upper secondary (ISCED 3) ²	53.4	66.6	41.6
<i>Upper secondary (ISCED 3) general</i>	52.7	65.5	41.5
<i>Upper secondary (ISCED 3) VET</i>	61.7	78.0	42.5
Post-secondary non-tertiary (ISCED 4)	n.r.	n.r.	n.r.
First stage of tertiary education (ISCED 5)*	57.7	74.5	47.3
Second stage of tertiary education (ISCED 6)	89.7	100.0	79.6
Unknown level	n.r.	n.r.	n.r.
All levels	52.8	66.0	42.4

Source: National Statistical Service.

Table 2: Unemployment rate by educational attainment and gender, 15–64 age group

Educational level (ISCED)	2008		
	Total	Males	Females
No education	28.6	22.1	72.7
Pre-primary (ISCED 0)	26.7	28.8	20.0
Primary (ISCED 1)	26.0	23.6	28.2
Lower secondary (ISCED 2)	29.8	26.8	35.0
Upper secondary (ISCED 3) ²	30.8	24.1	38.6
<i>Upper secondary (ISCED 3) general</i>	31.3	24.9	38.4
<i>Upper secondary (ISCED 3) VET</i>	25.6	16.0	40.3
Post-secondary non-tertiary (ISCED 4)	n.r.	n.r.	n.r.
First stage of tertiary education (ISCED 5)*	28.1	19.5	34.9
Second stage of tertiary education (ISCED 6)	0.3	0	0.6
Unknown level	n.r.	n.r.	n.r.
All Levels	29.4	22.4	36.4

Source: National Statistical Service.

The State Employment Service Agency (SESA) carries out regular research on supply and demand in the labour market. In general, the findings show that there is a mismatch between the qualifications required by employers and the profiles of those seeking work.

From a 2009 analysis carried out by SESA of around 85 000 registered unemployed, it appears that almost 50% have low or unclear qualifications. The highest demand is for middle-level vocational qualifications such as salespersons, welders, drivers, cooks and metal workers.

In conclusion it can be stated that, despite the fact that it is a resource-poor country that is relatively isolated from key neighbouring markets, Armenia has made remarkable progress in terms of economic growth and stabilisation. The educated and entrepreneurial labour force and potential support from the Diaspora are usually seen as Armenia's main competitive advantages. However, the ongoing crisis has shown that this recovery has been weak in terms of sustainability and that some sectors should be identified and developed to become the country's main economic drivers; these sectors should be supported with investment and human resources development to provide the necessary knowledge and skills. The Diaspora has played an important role in supporting the economic development of Armenia, creating a market for diamond cutting, tourism, IT and high-tech production, and this has shown that growth is coming mostly from new actors (domestic and foreign) rather than from the privatised state-owned enterprises.

The most important challenges that shape demand for the skills are (i) the ongoing transformation of the economy, (ii) the need to provide a qualified workforce in terms of education levels and ethics, (iii) the need to improve communication between demand and supply in the labour market, and (iv) the need to address the demands of new skills and of anticipating skills needs arising from the challenges of promoting economic development.

3. External efficiency: promoting equity and addressing social demand for human resources development

3.1. Regional disparity

There are 10 regions in Armenia, with high disparity in terms of economic development, poverty, unemployment and vulnerable groups.

According to the 2004–05 integrated survey of household living standards carried out by the National Statistical Service (NSS), the average national poverty rate was 29.8%, with the Shirak region registering the highest rate at 42.5% and the Vayots Dzor region the lowest at 19.2%.

Armenia has maintained the high enrolment in education that it had in the past, with the exception of pre-school education, which is particularly low in rural areas. According to official data for the 2008/09 academic year, the enrolment rate was 95.5% for primary education, 93.5% for middle or lower secondary education, and 81.9% for upper secondary programmes.

Despite the fact that high school enrolment has improved (from 74% in 2002), the proportion of drop-outs after primary education is still high, especially among children from poor households. In the 2008/09 academic year, the share of boys among drop-outs was 60.2%.

The issue of inequity is very relevant, particularly as regards quality of education, which is lower, with fewer days of instruction, in rural and less developed areas. Most vocational colleges don't have heating systems, so lessons are suspended during the coldest period of the year, between December and February.

Because of this disparity, internal migration has contributed greatly to increasing population in the cities, particularly Yerevan, leaving elderly and more vulnerable groups in rural areas, including single parents and unemployed women who have non-upgraded skills.

The economic divide between rural and urban regions is the first among the more striking social challenges that shape demand for skills. The second is the quality and value of education as leverage for social mobility through access to general secondary education and university. vocational graduates would require private tutorship to pass entrance examinations to universities, with serious cost implications for their families, underlining once again the inequity of the system and the fact that VET contributes to economic and social cohesion.

3.2. Demography

The third important social challenge which shapes demand for skills is related to demographic trends and the expected shrinking of the labour force. This is a result of the ageing of the population, declining birth rates and external migration. The large number of victims of the 1998 earthquake and the economic disruption immediately following the collapse of the Soviet Union contributed to changes in Armenia's demographic growth and migration rate.

According to population forecasts, the structure of population will change substantially between 2008 and 2050. It is predicted that the share of the working-age population will shrink by almost 8% over the forecasted period, while the share of the population above working age will increase by around 8.5%. No analysis has yet been carried out on the possible impact of these demographic trends on the education system, however.

3.3. Migration

According to household surveys regularly implemented by the NSS since 1998, about 6–10% of households state that a member of the family is temporarily out of the country for work, although the trend is declining. Very similar results have been produced by the 2007 NSS migration survey. According to this survey, an estimated 6% of the resident population were in emigration in 2007, of which about 85% reported leaving the country for overseas work. The main destinations for international migrants were Russia at 76.4% share, followed by the EU at 9.8% and the United States at 4.8%.

The higher level of mobility among the population is largely a positive thing as it alleviates to some extent the consequences of economic and social shocks. When it comes to labour migration in periods of economic downturn, it can help to reduce unemployment, generate private remittances and hence reduce poverty. There are also negative aspects, however, as huge net outflows of population can substantially reduce the economic potential of the nation, particularly if those leaving the country are those with higher educational attainment and skills – the so-called 'brain drain'.

In 2011, the EU and Armenia will begin discussions on the 'mobility partnership' to promote legal mobility between Armenia and the EU, with the following objectives:

- To facilitate the smooth reintegration into the labour market of Armenians voluntarily or forcibly returning home from the EU, and to help Armenian migrants make the best possible use of the skills and resources acquired through the experience of migration for the benefit of their own and Armenia's development.
- To encourage Armenians willing to migrate to the EU to make use of legal channels of migration, and to help them find jobs that match their skills or acquire skills that match the proposed jobs.

3.4. Adult learning

As mentioned in Chapter 1, a Concept of Lifelong Learning in Armenia was adopted by the Armenian government in October 2009. It defines the principles and concepts of lifelong learning in Armenia, states the main problems in the field and proposes ways to address them.

Investment in lifelong learning is extremely limited in Armenia, and data from Table 7 show that active employment measures organised by SESA reached the level of 0.02% of GDP in 2007.

Under the EU Sector Policy Support Programmes 2007, a study was carried out in 2009 to assess the feasibility of establishing a National Training Fund (NTF) to promote adult learning.

The study was based on a review of existing documents and on interviews with local stakeholders, including social partners, public institutions, companies, school training providers and employment centres.

The study highlights that the annual offering of training in Armenia includes, roughly:

- Employment services – 1 300 unemployed persons per year;
- Short-term courses in colleges – 1 000 trainees per year;
- Trade union organisations – 1 000 people per year;
- NGOs – 1 000 trainees per year;
- Large enterprises such as ArmenTel, Viva Cell, Grand Candy – 1 000 people each per year;
- Adult education organisations – 300 people per year;
- International programmes and projects – computer technologies and foreign languages are first and second place in the training courses;
- Centre for Professional Orientation – approximately 1 000 people, some hours of free consultations.

The findings of the study are:

- Virtually all stakeholders consulted were in favour of an NTF that is independent of government;
- All stakeholders in the Shirak, Lori and Tavush Marzes, while supportive of the concept of an NTF, were pessimistic as to whether employers would be prepared or able to pay into the fund in view of the current harsh economic climate (the Chamber of Commerce in Tavush reported that it had been forced to suspend membership subscriptions because members could not afford them);
- The majority of stakeholders thought employers would be well motivated to pay into an NTF if it could be demonstrated that the NTF would help to meet the skills needs of the labour market and its funding was transparent;
- A significant number of stakeholders considered it essential for international donor agencies to support the NTF in the early stages of development;

- A significant number of stakeholders thought the structure and composition of the council of the National Centre for VET Development could be applicable to the management of the NTF also;
- 30% of stakeholders considered it essential for employers to be granted tax reliefs if they were to be expected to contribute to the NTF;
- 30% of stakeholders felt that it would be very difficult for the government to grant tax relief for NTF contributions.

The conclusion of the study is that the conditions exist in Armenia for the establishment of an NTF and that it could be organised with the legal status of a foundation, governed by a board of trustees, with equal tripartite representation in terms of contribution and decision-making power.

SESA provides services throughout the country through a network of local employment services, including training for the unemployed. Because of scarce budget resources the training provided is quite limited; despite this, however, based on SESA statements, 75% of trainees can find a job after completing the training.

In conclusion, with reference to the role of VET in promoting equity and addressing social demand for human resources development, we can mention the following key priorities: regional disparity, demographics, migration and lifelong learning.

4. Internal efficiency of VET: resources, quality and governance

The following elements of VET provision have been prioritised in the above-mentioned Concept on the Development of Preliminary Professional and Middle Professional Education for increasing the efficiency of the system:

- i. Inadequate mobilisation, distribution and utilisation;
- ii. Low quality of VET provision;
- iii. Weak organisational structure and partnership;
- iv. Inadequate opportunities for young people and adults in terms of lifelong learning and professional education and training.

Each element can be analysed as follows:

(i) Mobilisation, distribution and utilisation of resources

GDP allocation to education was 2.8% of GDP in 2006/07; this is quite low when compared to other countries in the region. However, the share of state budget has shown the government's commitment to education and has grown from 7.9% of total public expenditure (TPE) in 1997 to 14% in 2006. That said, Armenia's TPE as a percentage of GDP is only 18–19% compared to an average of 40% in other OECD countries.

Public expenditure on general secondary education has increased in recent years at the expense of vocational and higher education. As shown below, this expenditure increased from 72% in 2001 to 79% in 2007.

Table 3: Expenditure for education

Years	% of total expenditure		
	2001	2004	2007
General secondary	72%	77%	79%
Preliminary VET	1.5%	0.9%	1.7%
Middle VET	3.6%	2.8%	2.6%
			4.3%

Source: Ministry of Finance, 2008.

It should be mentioned that:

- Primary and secondary education are free;
- Preliminary VET is mostly free (in the academic year 2008/09, only 6.8% of preliminary vocational students paid for their education), while middle VET is free for 25% of students only;
- higher education is free only for 21% of students in the state universities, and taking into consideration around 25 000 students of private universities as well, public expenditure represents on average 15%.

As shown in Table 4, below, the completion rate seems to be quite high in VET, particularly as regards females in middle VET.

Table 4: Gross completion rate by ISCED level, academic year 2008/09

Educational level	1999/2000		
	Total	Males	Females
Primary (ISCED 1)	80.6	80.8	80.4
Lower secondary (ISCED 2) total	96.5	96.2	96.8
<i>Lower secondary (ISCED 2) general</i>	89.6	88.9	90.3
<i>Lower secondary (ISCED 2) VET</i>			
Upper secondary (ISCED 3) total			
<i>Upper secondary (ISCED 3) general</i>	91.1	88.6	93.6
<i>Upper secondary (ISCED 3) VET</i>	111.1	98.7	142.2
Post-Secondary not Tertiary (ISCED 4) Total			
<i>Post-secondary not tertiary (ISCED 4) general</i>			
<i>Post-secondary non-tertiary (ISCED 4) VET</i>			
First stage of Tertiary education (ISCED 5) Total			
<i>First stage of tertiary education (ISCED 5)-1 general</i>	94.7	80.7	108.1
<i>First stage of tertiary education (ISCED 5)-2 general</i>	92	61.2	119.4
<i>First stage of tertiary education (ISCED 5) VET</i>	73.7	57.2	83.6
<i>Second stage of Tertiary education (ISCED 6)</i>	95.7	113.1	69.7

Source: National Statistical Service.

(ii) Quality of VET

The quality of VET in Armenia is quite low because of the reasons that have already been explained, namely:

- Inadequate facilities that have not received any capital investment over the last 20 years and lack public security measures, adequate sanitation/hygiene and sports facilities;
- Low allocation of public resources and limited private resources based on tuition fees;
- No investment from private business because of the lack of a legislative framework that would promote this;
- Low quality of teaching, because of lack of motivation of teachers;
- Outdated curricula, because of lack of interest in innovation and modernisation;
- Lack of vocational guidance and counselling because of lack of communication between the world of work and the world of education.

There are no mechanisms in the Armenian VET system for assessing the performance of institutions or individual staff members. Moreover, there is no method of assessment for the whole VET system. The recently established National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance,² which is responsible for both higher and vocational education, has been taking the first steps towards the definition of quality assessment standards and criteria, so the introduction and application of such a system is expected in the near future.

Teachers make an important contribution to the quality of education in any country, but in Armenia, they are not sufficiently supported by the authorities.

The average pupil–teacher ratio in Armenia, including all levels of education, was rather low in 2008/09 at 9.7:1, having not changed since late 1990s. At the same time, as shown in the table below, teachers have a lower salary than the national average, and this leads to lower attractiveness and motivation for this profession. The Armenian authorities should address this issue with an analysis of needs and a strategy for the future aimed at improving quality of teaching through adequate recruitment, professional development and wage policies.

Table 5: Teachers' salaries in 2008

Educational level (ISCED)	Country average wage	Average teacher salary and % of average country wage	
		Average teacher salary	% of average country wage
Pre-primary (ISCED 0)	87 406	25 000	28.60
Primary (ISCED 1)	87 406	89 607	102.52
Lower secondary (ISCED 2)			
Upper secondary (ISCED 3)			
Post-secondary non-tertiary (ISCED 4)	87 406	48 107	55.04
First stage of tertiary education (ISCED 5)	87 406	29 437	33.68
Second stage of tertiary education (ISCED 6)			
Total	87 406	80 189	91.74

Source: National Statistical Service.

To some extent, one tool for performance assessment is the Mid-Term Expenditure Framework, which has been an integral component of the Armenian government's annual budget preparation

² Established within the frameworks of the Bologna Process in accordance with the responsibilities taken on by Armenia.

cycle since 2003 as an instrument for programme performance budgeting. However, a performance measurement framework is not yet built into the programme budgeting structure in Armenia; the capacity is still being developed.

No financial or other type of incentive mechanisms are used to increase the efficiency and quality of the VET system.

Table 6: Cost per pupil (in Armenian drams)

	Cost per pupil			Public expenditure in ISCED 3		
	Upper secondary (ISCED 3) total	Upper secondary (ISCED 3) general	Upper secondary (ISCED 3) VET	Upper secondary (ISCED 3) total	Upper secondary (ISCED 3) general	Upper secondary (ISCED 3) VET
1999/2000	10 814.8	28 873.5	75 299.2	3.3	2.9	0.5
2004/05	81 146.5	75 433.4	438 113.9	7.9	7.2	0.7
2005/06	91 721.8	83 545.4	631 131.5	9.4	8.4	1.0
2006/07	128 880.4	118 235.4	717 439.3	13.1	11.8	1.3
2007/08	167 774.3	158 922.1	350 050.3	15.4	13.9	1.5
2008/09	181 158.5	170 216.2	389 779.9	16.7	14.9	1.8

Source: National Statistical Service.

The colleges, being non-commercial state organisations, are limited in terms of engaging in entrepreneurial activities, but these could provide additional financial income. The capacities of supervisors of institutions are also limited. Only recently (2009–10), with the assistance of the UNDP VET project, a draft paper was prepared on the income generation model for VET institutions, which is currently in the discussion phase.

As shown in Table 6, the cost per pupil in VET was still more than double that of general education in 2008/2009, although data show that average costs in VET were halved in 2007. This applies only to preliminary VET, because the contribution to middle VET from the state budget is only 25%. The high costs of preliminary VET are in line with international trends; some analysis should be carried out to assess the reasons for this, taking into particular consideration the low quality and, thus, high inefficiency of the system.

Furthermore, financially and/or morally encouraging mechanisms for increasing college teachers' levels of performance (in respect to the quality of their work) should be introduced. There is no system of ranking for teachers, even by years of work experience. Even though the management of each institution is entitled to define specific bonuses for more qualified teachers, this is almost impossible in practical terms due to the adverse financial condition of the institutions.

(iii) Weak organisational structure and partnership

VET management has been highly centralised until recently under the Department of VET, which has always been understaffed and with limited resources and has therefore been concerned mainly with routine work and not so much with modernisation and innovation.

Since 2008, the following steps have been undertaken to improve the VET structure:

- A National Council for VET Development was established in 2008 as a tripartite body aimed at providing guidance for VET reform. Social partners are represented in the council, which should meet at least twice a year.
- The organisational structure of the VET Department of the MoES was reviewed, and a new Division of VET Policy Development, Strategy and Planning was established (2008).
- A National Centre for VET Development has been established under the Institute of Education, with the task of revising curricula and learning materials and providing teacher training.

- College governing boards were established in all VET colleges in accordance with the law adopted in 2005. It took three years to establish these boards, with lengthy discussion about their representativeness. Companies and local authorities are members of the boards but local employment offices are not, and this may limit links with potential employment opportunities.

The progress mentioned above is remarkable, but it is too early to assess its effectiveness and the process will certainly require additional capacity building.

(iv) Inadequate opportunities for young people and adults in terms of lifelong learning and professional education and training

Lifelong learning is recognised as a top priority in Armenia. The establishment of the NTF could be a good opportunity, and the National VET Council is supporting the idea and promoting it with key stakeholders.

Table 7: Active employment measures organised by SESA

	Expenditures on ALMP	GDP at current price	Government expenditure	% of GDP	% of government expenditure
2000	0	1 031	210	0	0
2005	0.598	2 243	418	0.03	0.14
2006	0.695	2 656	481	0.03	0.14
2007	0.711	3 149	635	0.02	0.11
2008	0.890	3 646	811	0.02	0.11
2009	0.759	3 166	929	0.02	0.08

Source: National Statistical Service.

5. Innovation, partnership and entrepreneurship

As mentioned above, a remarkable process of innovation has been introduced in VET since 2004 with the adoption of many strategic documents, revision of curricula, upgrading of equipment, rehabilitation of buildings, teacher training, etc. The process, which is still ongoing, has been highly supported by donors, because while VET is conceptually important in the political agenda, this commitment is not borne out in reality, particularly due to lack of resources. There is quite strong resistance to increased resource allocation to middle VET in order to enable a higher number of free seats to be offered, particularly from the Ministry of Finance.

Donor assistance will certainly improve the quality of VET, but only in a limited number of schools. It will then be up to the government to expand the reform to the rest of the system and to allocate resources for that.

The school management boards represent a good example of innovation, but there is no systematic monitoring mechanism on the operational impact of the boards at the school level. The boards' impact may develop if schools are given more decision-making responsibilities – for example, through the implementation of income-generating activities.

The new curricula have been prepared with the participation of sectoral committees representing the employment side as an additional important sign of the intention of promoting partnership and the links between the world of work and the world of education. The impact of the curricula will have to be reviewed on a regular basis and improved, and adaptation introduced.

There is no information available on the role played by VET in the promotion of entrepreneurship in Armenia.

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Annex 1: VET system scope, legal and institutional frameworks, additional data

	1990	1995	2000	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Institutions providing pre-school education	1 192	1 081	769	699	653	645	645	637	628
Children, thousands	142.9	71.3	46.6	46.9	46.0	48.7	48.0	50.5	53.7
Share of children attending pre-school institutions, %	30.8	17.6	17.2	19.1	20.0	21.8	21.8	23.3	28.9
urban areas	N/A	N/A	27.6	27.9	27.4	29.7	29.0	31.1	39.3
rural areas	N/A	N/A	7.8	8.1	8.7	9.6	10.5	10.3	13.6
Institutions providing general secondary education, including private	1 397	1 466	1 458	1 472	1 434	1 467	1 467	1 452	1 475
Pupils, thousands	608.8	583.5	574.2	501.9	488.1	477.9	465.4	431.3	414.8
Pupil-teacher ratio	9.4	10.6	9.8	10.8	11.3	11.2	10.8	10.3	10.0
urban areas	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
rural areas	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Institutions providing vocational training	N/A	N/A	56	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Students, thousands	N/A	N/A	5.1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Institutions providing secondary specialised education, including private	70	72	105	105	108	111	108	106	104
Students, thousands	45.9	21.1	28.7	31.1	30.5	30.8	30.8	31.1	31.8
per 10,000 population	129	56	75.5	96.8	94.8	95.7	95.7	96.4	98.2
Secondary specialised education entrants, thousands	15.7	9.8	11.1	11.6	11.1	11.6	11.7	12.1	11.9
Secondary specialised education graduates, thousands	19.1	6.9	8.1	8.5	9.4	8.7	8.4	8.2	8.6
per 10,000 population	54	18	21.3	26.5	29.2	27.0	26.1	25.3	26.6
Institutions providing higher education, including private	14	15	90	93	88	89	87	85	90
Students, thousands	68.4	39.4	60.7	77.9	85.1	97.8	105.8	112.2	114.4
per 10,000 population	193	105	159.6	242.5	264.7	303.7	328.4	347.5	353.3
Higher education entrants, thousands	13.3	6.9	15.5	21.5	23.0	24.6	25.6	26.2	27.7
Higher education graduates, thousands	10.5	9.8	9.7	11.7	12.2	13.3	15.5	17.9	26.1
per 10,000 population	30	26	25.5	36.4	38.0	41.3	48.1	55.3	80.6

Source: National Statistical Service.

In 2005/06, the Armenian VET system included

- 28 schools for **preliminary VET** (craft), covering about 20 professions (two to three years after basic or one year after secondary education, delivering a craftsman's qualification at upper secondary level);
- 81 public secondary vocational schools (colleges) defined as **middle VET**, with about 120 professions (three to four years after basic or two years after secondary at tertiary education level);
- 34 private colleges covering about 15 professions (delivering a 'junior technician' qualification);
- Three universities providing secondary vocational programmes (university colleges).

Fifty-four out of the 81 middle vocational colleges are under the responsibility of the MoES, while the rest are under the Ministries of Agriculture (nine colleges), Health (12 colleges), Culture (three colleges), Energy (one college) and Sports and Youth (two colleges).

The distribution of craft students in the major professions is as follows: services – 31%; transport – 21%; art and design – 13%; construction – 5%; agriculture – 5.6%; light industry – 3%. The distribution of professions in colleges is as follows: healthcare and sport – 31%; economics – 16%; pedagogy – 14%; transport and communication – 9%.

Participation in secondary education has remained constant since 2000, with a slight increase in general secondary, while participation in tertiary education has increased from 26.9% in 1999/2000 to 39.9% in 2008/09. According to data from the same year, enrolment was 5% at craft VET level and 21% at middle VET level.

Different levels of education in Armenia are realised through different educational programmes that define the content of education for a specific level and area, the required volume of learning, and skills and competencies.

The Law on Education defines the following educational programmes implemented in Armenia:

- General education (basic and supplementary);
- Professional education (basic and supplementary).

Professional educational programmes are aimed at preparing specialists with their corresponding qualifications, shaping their skills and competencies and extending their knowledge through alternation of general and professional education levels.

Professional educational programmes are:

- Preliminary professional (craftsmanship) education;
- Middle professional education;
- Higher professional education;
- Post-graduate professional education.

The first two levels are considered as vocational education (approximately corresponding to EQF levels 2–4).

The goal of preliminary professional (craftsmanship) education is preparing students, on the basis of basic general education, for jobs requiring preliminary professional qualification such as qualified workers or craftsmen. This level of education is realised mostly at preliminary professional educational institutions (craftsmanship colleges) and provides the qualification level of 'craftsman'.

The goal of middle professional education is preparing students, on the basis of secondary (complete) general education, with middle professional qualifications and expanding their general and professional competencies. Middle professional education is realised in middle professional education institutions (colleges), which can also provide preliminary professional education. The graduates are granted the qualification level of 'specialist'. A number of middle vocational education courses can also be taken on the basis of basic general education.

When entering a preliminary or middle professional educational institution on the basis of basic general education, graduates also receive secondary education: the diploma earned by these graduates is also recognised as a certificate of secondary (complete) general education (Matura). At the same time, in cases of preliminary vocational education on the basis of basic general education, obtaining a qualification within the reduced periods without obtaining secondary (complete) general education is permitted.

The list of professions in relation to which vocational education can be organised has been adopted by the government. Nowadays around 130 professions are taught in vocational colleges.

Instruction in vocational education institutions is provided both for free and subject to tuition fees. The latter were introduced in 1992. The number of seats available for free education by profession is confirmed annually by the government, based on the demand for corresponding

specialists and on the volume of budgetary allocation for vocational education. The ministries allocate the confirmed free seats to the vocational colleges under their supervision and also define the number of seats that will be subject to tuition fees.

Enrolment takes place on a competitive basis. For the free seats, entrance examinations are required in two to five subjects, while for fee-paying seats competition is based on basic general or secondary (complete) general education certificate scores. First- and second-degree disabled people,³ orphans (up to 18 years of age), children and spouses of deceased soldiers enjoy entrance privileges; upon passing the entrance examinations successfully, they are enlisted in places for non-competitive free education (if such are foreseen in the line of profession they have chosen).

In Armenia the authorised body for state governance in the sphere of education is the MoES, but a number of other ministries (such as the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Healthcare and Ministry of Culture) and regional governments (*Marzpetarans*) have middle professional institutions under their jurisdiction. The MoES develops and realises general educational policy, while the other agencies carry out the administration of educational institutions under their jurisdiction and participate in various activities related to MoES competences (e.g., standards development).

Management of educational institutions is carried out by directors appointed and dismissed by the corresponding governance body. Collegial governance is implemented by the boards (acting since 2008), which are responsible particularly for election of college directors and the ongoing supervision over their operations, approval of institution development programmes, making decisions on profit management directions and examining the annual budget, setting tuition fees, and discussing curricula and subject programmes, which were previously under the sole authority of the college director.

The main legal basis for vocational education in Armenia includes:

- Constitution of the Republic of Armenia (2005);
- Law on Education (1999);
- Law on Preliminary Professional (Craftsmanship) and Middle Professional Education (2005).

The Law on Education defines the main principles of state policy in the field of education, which are:

- Humanitarian character of education; priority of universal values, human life and health; free and all-round development of a person; development of an outlook of civil consciousness; national dignity; patriotism; legality; environmental protection;
- Accessibility, continuity and consecution of education and its compliance with the development level of the students, their peculiarities and degree of preparedness, guaranteeing the obligatory state minimum;
- Ensuring democratic principles in the field of education;
- Integration into the international education system;
- Reasonable autonomy of educational institutions;
- Ensuring opportunities for citizens to acquire education in state or private educational institutions;
- Ensuring equal status for educational institutions and their certificates (graduation documents).

The Law on VET regulates the state policy principles, organisational–legal and financial–economic bases, rights and responsibilities of legal and physical entities in VET.

³ There are three levels of definition for the handicapped population. The first level is the most severe.

This law introduced a number of concepts which were new to the country, such as social partnership, credits and student benefits. The principles of state policy in the field of VET are also represented in an innovative way:

- Ensuring adequacy of students' professional knowledge and skill to the economy and labour market requirements;
- Transparency and collective nature of management and leadership of the craftsmanship and middle professional education and training system;
- Competitiveness and publicity;
- Equality of subjects providing craftsmanship and middle professional education;
- Self-governance and controllability of craftsmanship and middle professional educational establishments;
- Cooperation with social partners;
- Matching craftsmanship and middle professional education qualifications with international standards.

Besides the above, there are other laws that are directly related to the regulation of VET in Armenia, such as:

- Law on State Non-Commercial Organisations (2001);
- Law on Licensing (2001);
- Law on Ecological Education of Population (2001);
- Law on Social Protection of Children without Parent Care (2002);
- Law on Education of Individuals with Special Educational Needs (2005).

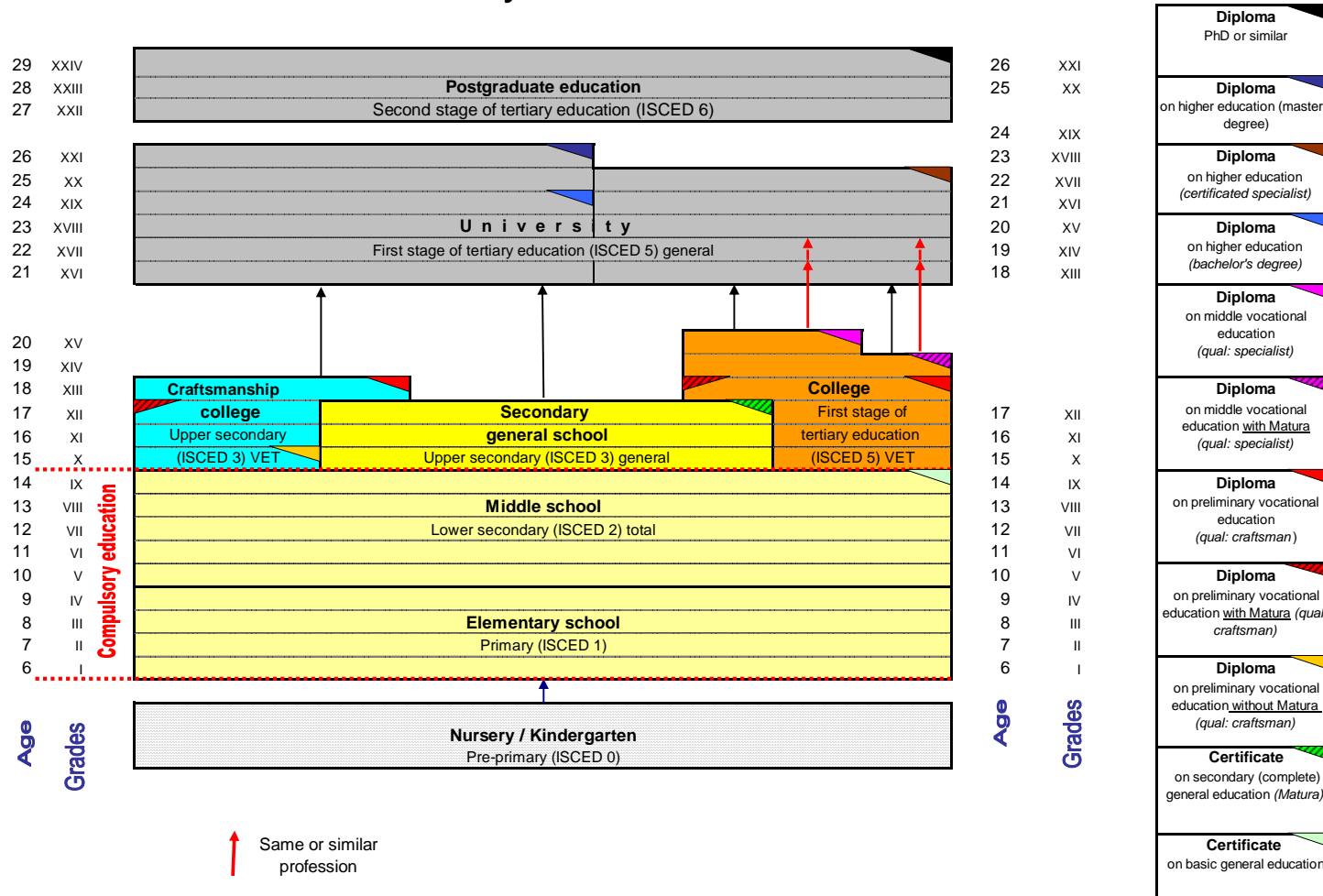
The lifelong learning system in Armenia includes various components, among which a large proportion comprise non-formal education implemented in numerous forms such as:

- Trainings and retraining courses provided in different organisations for their own staff;
- Vocational and non-vocational training courses provided by both commercial and non-profit organisations, including the public (state-owned) educational institutions;
- Different targeted training courses provided by international organisations and projects, including those for charitable purposes;
- A variety of preparatory courses (e.g., preparation for university entrance exams), including private tuition.

Non-formal learning activities are not registered in the country (mainly because no license is required for their provision), and no relevant official statistics on them exist. According to some experts' estimations, however, tens of thousands of people are involved in these activities. There is almost no legislative base regulating this area.

Education system in Armenia

Education system in Armenia



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